

Independent experts to review safety of construction materials

- Experts appointed to lead independent review into system of testing the safety of construction products
- Action taken as Grenfell Tower Inquiry exposed evidence of potential gaming of the system by some manufacturers
- Measures form part of the biggest improvements to building safety standards in 40 years

Residents across England will be better protected as the government takes the next step to ensure materials used to build the nation's homes are safe and tested properly.

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick has today (20 April 2021) appointed two experts to lead an independent review of the system for testing construction products. Former government adviser and construction expert Paul Morrell OBE will be the chair of the independent panel, along with legal expert Anneliese Day QC.

The review, announced earlier this year, will examine how to strengthen the current system for testing construction products to provide confidence that these materials are safe and perform as marketed.

The review forms part of the government's ongoing programme of work to reform and strengthen building safety regulation and comes after testimony to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry exposed evidence of testing irregularities and potential gaming of the system by some manufacturers.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry has heard deeply concerning suggestions that some construction product manufacturers may have gamed the system for testing these materials and compromised the safety of residents.

We are taking these allegations very seriously and will await the Inquiry's final recommendations – but it is clear that action is needed now to ensure products used on buildings always meet the highest safety standards.

I am pleased to appoint Paul Morrell OBE and Anneliese Day QC to lead this independent review of the system for testing construction products that will build on the significant progress we have already made to make buildings safer.

The panel will engage with a wide range of stakeholders to seek their views

on how the system of safety testing of construction products could be improved and will report later this year with recommendations.

The government has already announced that a new National Regulator for Construction Products will be established within the Office of Product Safety and Standards and be given powers to remove any product from the market that presents a significant safety risk; and prosecute and fine any company that breaks the rules.

These measures form part of the government's wider, ambitious reform of the sector, which includes the draft Building Safety Bill, that will bring the biggest improvements to building safety standards in 40 years and strengthen the regulation of construction products.

The Independent Review of Construction Products Testing Regime

Paul Morrell OBE – appointed as chair of the Independent Review of the system for testing Construction Products.

Paul served as the government's Chief Construction Advisor (2009–12) and is a former senior partner at construction consultancy, Davis Langdon. Paul brings extensive experience in the construction sector and has previously led major government reviews, including the Low Carbon Construction Strategy in 2010 and the government Construction Strategy in 2011, as well as a review on industry training boards in a report published more recently in 2017.

Anneliese Day QC – Anneliese is a legal expert in the construction sector, having received a wide range of prestigious awards, including 'Construction and Energy Silk' of the Year 2018 at the Legal 500 UK Awards; 'Construction Silk of the Year' at the Chambers and Partners Bar Awards in 2018 and 2014; and 'Barrister of the Year' 2014 by The Lawyer.

The National Regulator for Construction Products

In July 2020, the government published in draft the Building Safety Bill. The Bill set out the biggest reforms to building safety regulation for a generation and included provisions to strengthen and extend the scope of the powers available to government to regulate construction products.

On the 19 January 2021, the Housing Secretary announced that government will establish a National Regulator for Construction Products to enforce these rules and ensure the materials used to build homes are safe.

The regulator will be based in the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), which will receive up to £10 million in 2021-22 to set up this new function.

The announcement follows recommendations in the Dame Judith Hackitt Review that industry and the government must ensure that construction products are properly tested, certified, labelled and marketed.

Together, the Fire Safety Bill, Fire Safety Order and the Building Safety

Bill will revolutionise safety and oversight for residents in all buildings.

The government has published an update of the progress and steps being taken since the Grenfell fire.